

**NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
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**Towards Empowering Fisheries Officers to Manage
the Fish Stocks, Biodiversity and Environment of
Kyoga Basin Lakes**



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Current Policies, Laws and Regulations In Relation to Management of Kyoga Basin Lakes

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Introduction

To modernize the fishery sub-sector there is need to sustainably exploit the resource and manage the environment. This will transform into guaranteed incomes and food security to the fishers and other people employed in the fishery related activities. The overall fisheries sub-sector goal is to ensure increased and sustainable fish production and utilization by properly managing capture fisheries, promoting Aquaculture reducing post harvest losses and protecting the fish habitat. This will contribute to the overall national development policy of poverty eradication and food security through the modernization of the development sector.

Modernization of the fishery sub-sector therefore, will translate into the major goal of eradicating poverty which is Uganda Government's strategy in "Plan for Modernization of Agriculture", thus enabling the fisher community to improve their livelihoods in a sustainable manner. In the context of PMA (Plan for Modernization of Agriculture) the fisheries sub-sector is of strategic importance not only as a means of increasing house hold incomes but also as a critical item in covering the nutritional needs of the people. Fish and fish products have of recent been the fastest growing non-traditional exports and foreign exchange earners. Therefore, there is great need to carry out fishing and protect the environment and fish habitats with carefully selected public sector interventions.

The fishery of Kyoga basin lakes especially Kyoga main and Lake Kwana has changed from the original multi species fishery to a fishery comprising of the introduced Nile perch and Nile tilapia and the native species – Mukene (*Rastrineobola argentea*)

The Kyoga basin lakes during 1969 – 1986 registered higher catches of fish than those from L. Victoria (U). During the period the catches on Kyoga basin lakes ranged from 48.9 metric tonnes (1969) to 128mt (1986) with the maximum of 167mt recorded in 1977 to 1978.

During the same period the catches on L. Victoria (U) had a range of 46.3mt to 56.8mt (maximum). However, the catches from Kyoga basin lakes continued to decline and in 1994, 80.2mt were registered compared to 103mt for L. Victoria. Such trends for the water system need to be looked into. This can be through putting forward government policies (Plans of action), laws (rules made by the

authority for the proper regulation of the fisheries and the environment) and regulations governing the conduct of the people utilizing the resources.

For the formulation of policies, laws and regulations for management of fisheries and aquatic systems there is a requirement for scientific knowledge to guide in this formulation. Such knowledge is used to guide in sustainable management of capture fisheries, integrating lake productivity processes into fisheries management, prevention of pollution and eutrophication of the aquatic environment, control of invasive weeds e.g. water hyacinth, enhancement of aquaculture production, reduction of post-harvest fish losses and ensuring fish quality, development of options for optimization of socio-economic benefits from fisheries and for co-management.

The National Fisheries Policy

Under the objective of the constitution, the state is to protect important natural resources including water, wetlands, fauna and flora on behalf of the people. In line with the broader policy framework of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the National Fisheries Policy (May 2000) formulated by Fisheries Resources Department (FRD) provides strategies to ensure sustainable exploitation of the fisheries resources at the highest possible levels, thereby maintaining fish availability for both present and future generations without under-mining the environment. The policy ensures that the fishery industry is regulated and consumers assured of quality and safety of fish and fishery products. Investments in the industry can only be sustained when the resource is managed responsibly. Uganda fish markets outside demand effective regulatory and administrative arrangements to ensure quality and safety of fish and fishery products.

The general principal is that Government should be provided with a flexible system of managing, utilising and conserving the fisheries resources of Uganda together with an institutional structure to achieve the same.

The key elements of the policy are:

1. **Capture Fisheries Management:** Promote fisheries management in a sustainable manner involving participation of stakeholders at all levels: Guide lines are in process for: promotion of community participation in fishery management
 - to reduce excessive fishing effort and use of destructive fishing gears and methods, conservation of biodiversity
 - to ensure clean water environment for fish survival and protection of fish habitats
 - to harmonise fisheries management regimes with riparian districts

2. **Open access fishery:** Control of over fishing by limiting the total number of fishers and quantity of gears allowable: information for shifting from open access fisheries to controlled fisheries involving protection of breeding, nursery and fish biodiversity areas and introduction of closed areas and seasons for particular fish species
3. **Sustainable funding:** Identify and implement sustainable funding mechanisms for improved fisheries management: How incomes are distributed in the fishery sector either through the resources rent where part of the revenue from fisheries sector can be ploughed back into fishery management or direct funding mechanisms
4. **Aquaculture based production:** Increase Aquaculture based production to reduce the gap between fish supply and demand: Studies and recommendations in how to enhance fish production in minor lakes and rivers and ponds suitable and high quality species for enhancement of fishery and diversification culture and preparing of fish species in ponds and rivers including production cost studies
5. **Fish utilization:** To ensure safety quality and wholesomeness of fish and fishery products before placement in both domestic and foreign markets: recommendations on reduction of post harvest losses in fish from production to consumer and contamination in fishery products
 - microbial contamination in fish
 - fish storage preservation conditions and methods
 - fish handling, transportation, distribution and handling and packaging
6. **Fish Trade:** Encourage a wide range of pre-packed value added fishery products for more competitive marketing: studies on shelf life of the fish and fishery products, marketing and the strategies for adding value to products
7. **Investment in fisheries:** To institute a deliberate effort directed towards attracting investments in the fisheries industry where such ventures are profitable and where government is not in position to finance from public resources: information on essential infrastructures at fish landing sites accessibility and standard hygiene
8. **Human resources development:** Develop adequate and skilled man-power in the technical and managerial disciplines in both public and private fisheries sector: technology dissemination through training and work shops e.g. train decentralised personnel at districts to be able to take on fisheries management responsibilities train fishers and farmers in production and farming skills

9. **Fisheries Research:** Scientifically investigate issues pertinent to fisheries and develop appropriate technologies: research information/technologies developed obtained packaged and disseminated to end users to guide in policy, laws and regulations for management of fisheries and aquatic environment
10. **Scientific knowledge:** To ensure that fisheries management is based on scientific knowledge: carry out demand driven, client oriented research

However, current government policy on fisheries is in transition from control authority vested by law in the minister responsible for Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries and the Commissioner for fisheries to shared control by the districts under the policy of decentralization. But the harmonization of the necessary policies and practices, institutional arrangements and the legal framework appear to be still incomplete.

Laws and regulations

The substantive law that provides for the regulation of the Uganda Fisheries is the fish and Crocodile Act enacted in 1951 which was revised in 1964. The Act is a good one and must have been an advanced one at the time it came into force. However, close examination of the laws related to fisheries management shows that most of the laws are not sufficient to ensure sustainable management of the fishery sector. For example, the existing law does not have incentives and dis-incentives which will ensure the proper utilisation and conservation of the fisheries resources, penalty charges are out dated, pollution control not well covered, gear theft, light fishing the law is not covering all water bodies and is not flexible.

The law is now considered by the number of officials in the government and other persons concerned with fisheries matters to be inadequate to cope with the domestic and international changes in fisheries administration and the latest policy thinking. The Act by current standards is neither comprehensive enough nor flexible enough to provide for the proper management and conservation of fisheries, fish habitats and the water environment etc.

A new national fisheries bill is in offing for implementing the "new National" fisheries policy.